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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CLINE).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

March 7, 2023.

I hereby appoint the Honorable BEN CLINE to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

KEVIN MCCARTHY,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 9, 2023, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with time equally allocated between the parties and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

CALIFORNIA'S WATER FLUCTUATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to the extreme winter storms that continue to batter California and the West Coast, leaving some Californians stranded in their homes and communities across the State with damaged infrastructure. Approximately 16 million people have been impacted in recent weeks.

Last week, Governor Newsom declared a state of emergency for 13 coun-

ties, including Tulare County, which I represent, and other important areas. State officials estimate damage costs could surpass \$1 billion.

California's snowpack is approaching record levels in California's Sierra Nevada. In most cases, that would be good news. Officials believe this may rival the 1982-1983 snow year.

However, this is good news for a State that has suffered long-term drought that forced residents to cut usage and ration water, farmers to fallow hundreds of thousands of acres of productive land, and left landowners with a record number of dry wells in the Central Valley. That was just a few months ago.

However, now the situation has changed. We now have to do a better job of managing in real time long-term water regulations that aren't working. We need to be better prepared to avoid what happened in communities like Planada and others where flooding damaged farms and displaced farmworkers.

That is why we need to fast-track improvements to our water infrastructure, using every tool in our water toolbox to divert water to recharge overdrafted aquifers. You can see from the snowpack here and from the flooding there, this is what has been occurring since the beginning of the first of the year. Therefore, we must increase water storage in all ways in wet years, like this one, to ensure that we can withstand the dry spells.

If we would have completed projects like the Sites Reservoir, which has been talked about for years, we would have been able to store 1.5 million additional acre-feet of water.

Thanks to the bipartisan infrastructure law, we do have Federal dollars available to expand projects that are currently in progress: Los Vaqueros and Del Puerto Reservoirs and raising the dam at the San Luis Reservoir, which is expected to be filled in the next 45 days.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, this weekend, we are going to have a major test in California because forecasters are predicting another atmospheric river that will provide warm storms, which could melt recent snow up in the mountains. When warm water hits that snow, it melts. If that happens, our rivers will carry a deluge of water toward vulnerable communities that we may not be able to protect.

These massive fluctuations, from extreme wet years to extreme dry periods, are a result of climate change, and we need to make smart investments to do a better job to prepare for the new reality. Knowing this, we need to make real changes in how we allow water managers to adjust and focus on real-time operations, not some predetermined date rooted in decades-old data.

I commend Governor Newsom for issuing an executive order to expand California's capacity to capture storm runoff during these wet times by accelerating groundwater recharge projects, which is absolutely necessary.

Last week, the Bureau of Reclamation announced an initial allocation of 35 percent for south-of-the-delta agriculture and water service contractors. We can and should do better. It is understandably a conservative initial allocation, but now we have more heavy rains coming. It is time to raise those allocations to the highest feasible levels. We must divert water to our communities and farmers who are ready and willing to take water to recharge groundwater.

Toward the future, I am working to rewrite the farm bill this year to improve water conservation, enhance opportunities for groundwater recharge so that our overdraft aquifers reach sustainability. The people of the San Joaquin Valley deserve no less.

California, with a new water blueprint needs to invest, invest the \$1.2 trillion in the bipartisan infrastructure law, \$4.5 billion for drought relief. Taking action and mastering real-time

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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